

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 3-13 are pending in the application. Claims 1 and 3-12 are indicated as being allowable. Claim 13 stands rejected. By this paper, claims 7, 10, and 13 have been amended. Entry of this amendment and reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are hereby respectfully solicited in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 7 and 10 have been amended to correct grammatical and spelling informalities. Claim 13 has been amended to recite that when the buckle body is coupled to the first and second waist strap fasteners, the shoulder strap coupling sections are offset from the respective first and second openings and remain exterior of the buckle body. Support for this limitation can be found in paragraph [0027] of the published application. No new matter has been added.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §102

Claim 13 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(a) as being anticipated by the Century Products publication and under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Cheetham (GB 2286851). Both the Century Products publication and Cheetham disclose a buckle assembly with a buckle body having first and second openings and first and second waist strap fasteners. Each waist strap fastener has a fastener coupling section for coupling with the first and second openings. Both references also disclose an assembly having respective shoulder strap coupling sections and first and second shoulder strap fasteners. Each shoulder strap fastener has a waist strap coupling section for coupling to the shoulder strap coupling sections. This connects the first waist strap fastener to the first shoulder strap fastener and connects the second waist strap fastener to the second shoulder strap fastener. However, when the buckle body in either of these two references is coupled to the first and second waist strap fasteners, the shoulder strap coupling sections are not offset from the respective first and second openings of the buckle body. Instead, the shoulder strap coupling sections lie in the same plane as the first and second openings of the buckle body.

Neither the Century Products publication nor Cheetham discloses or suggests a buckle assembly as now claimed. Specifically, neither reference discloses shoulder strap coupling sections that are offset from the respective first and second openings of the buckle body when the buckle body is coupled to the first and second waist strap fasteners so that the shoulder strap couplings remain exterior of the buckle body.

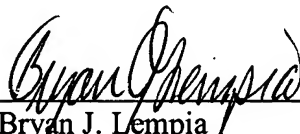
The applicant believes that claim 13 as now presented is allowable over both the Century Products publication and Cheetham. The applicant respectfully requests entry of this amendment and allowance of all pending claims.

CONCLUSION

The examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below in order to discuss any remaining issues or matters of form that will place this case in condition for allowance.

No fee is believed due at this time.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Bryan J. Lempia", is written over a horizontal line.

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